

Commercial solar havana

HAVANA TIMES - After modeling a boiler, installing photovoltaic panels, and putting together a device to dehydrate food with the help of the sun, Felix Morffi is setting up his home as a space to produce and promote renewable energy in Cuba.

With two tanks, glass, aluminum sheets, as well as bricks, sand and cement for the installation, this 86-year-old retiree created in 2006 the solar-powered boiler that satisfies his domestic needs and he shows it off proudly.

He also has a group of 16 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the house, which were imported in 2019, and they provide 5 kilowatts of power (kWp) and he helps out at the small car repair workshop for state-led and private companies.

"We receive a monthly average of just over 2000 pesos (approximately 83 USD, at the official exchange rate)," for this energy boost and as part of a contract with Cuba's Electricity Union, belonging to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, "which is more or less the amount we paid for our consumption in the same time period," Morffi told IPS in an interview at his home.

However, he believes that the 12.5 cents of the dollar rate for every kiloWatt (kW) of energy provided to the grid should be raised if they want more people to contribute to this energy source.

Since 2014, Cuba has a policy to develop renewable energies and their efficient use, and in 2019, Decree-Law 345 established regulations to increase participation in electricity generation and thereby gradually reduce fossil fuel consumption.

Other decisions look to encourage self-sufficiency with decentralized generation and selling surplus to the state electric company, as well as duty-free imports on non-commercial photovoltaic systems, parts and pieces.

According to many studies, Cuba receives an average solar irradiance of over 5 kW per m² per day, which is considered high and presents great potential on this archipelago with over 110,800 km² and an annual average of 330 sunny days.

Up until late 2021, approximately 500 million USD had been invested in expanding solar, wind, biomass and hydroelectric energy sources, according to figures from the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

Meanwhile, over 160,000 homes out of the 3.9 million residences nationwide – especially in mountainous and hard-to-reach areas -, receive electricity from solar photovoltaic modules, government statistics show.

However, over all clean energy sources only make up 5% of the island's electricity generation, a panorama the Government wants to radically transform, with an ambitious target of reaching 37% by 2030.

Substantial change to Cuba's energy matrix is a matter of national security, as it is very dependent on fossil fuel imports and has been hit hard by constant energy deficits.

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